

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ROME 14875 131739Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03
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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 7140
SECDEF WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 14875

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, EFIN, IT
SUBJECT: RIFS/ITALY

REF: (A) SECDEF MSG DTG 011701Z SEP 77, (B) USCINCEUR MSG DTG
030915Z SEP 77 (NOTAL), (C) ROME 14444

1. FOLLOWING IS IN RESPONSE TO PARAGRAPH 3 OF REF B
WHICH REQUESTED CURRENT APPRAISAL OF LIKELY RESPONSE FROM
THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT TO POSSIBLE RIF ACTIONS CARRIED OUT
AT U.S. INSTALLATIONS IN NEAR FUTURE.

2. WE HAVE NO DOUBT THE REACTION OF THE GOI WILL BE NEGATIVE.
MOREOVER RIF ACTIONS OVER THE NEAR TERM WILL BE SEEN AS
DISTINCTLY UNHELPFUL IN THE PRESENT DIFFICULT POLITICO-
ECONOMIC CONTEXT. THERE ARE, IN ADDITION OTHER ASPECTIOS
THAT SHOULD BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED BEFORE ANY RIFS ARE
AUTHORIZED THAT WILL INVOLVE EMPLOYEES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR
RETIREMENT.

3. OUR REF C IS PARTICULARLY TIMELY AND RELEVANT. IT
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 ROME 14875 131739Z

IS VERY DIFFICULT TO FIRE AN ITALIAN. THE RESULT MORE
OFTEN THAN NOT IS RECOURSE TO THE COURTS AS WELL AS
LABOR AGITATION IN THE FORM OF STRIKES THAT HAVE IN THE
PAST BROUGHT ACTIVITIES IN SOME OF OUR INSTALLATIONS
TO A VIRTUAL STANDSTILL. IT IS WORTH RECALLING THAT
ARTICLE IX PARA 5 OF THE STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENT
OBLIGATES US TO ABIDE BY THE LEGISLATION OF THE RE-

CEIVING STATE IN MEETING LOCAL CIVILIAN LABOR REQUIREMENTS.
AS INDICATED IN REF C THIS OFFERS NO COMFORT.

4. AT PRESENT MOST LOCAL HIRES AT U.S. INSTALLATIONS ARE ORGANIZED BY A UNION THAT IS GENERALLY FRIENDLY TO U.S./ NATO OBJECTIVES. THERE IS ALREADY CONSIDERABLE ACTIVITY AT SOME INSTALLATIONS BY OTHER LESS FRIENDLY AND MORE MILITANT UNIONS WHICH WOULD BE STRENGTHENED IN THEIR CLAIM FOR RECOGNITION IF LOCAL EMPLOYEE DISSATISFACTION WITH THE STATUS QUO WERE TO SWELL THEIR RANKS.

5. THE PROBLEMS ATTENDANT UPON LOCAL CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT ARE AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN A GROWING CONGERIES OF IRRITANTS THAT ARE BEGINNING TO ERODE THE SUPPORT THAT HAS HERETOFORE BEEN FAIRLY CONSTANT IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR INSTALLATIONS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES, COMPETITION FOR SCARCE HOUSING AND NARCOTICS ABUSE AMONG THE CURRENTLY MOST IMPORTANT. A REDUCTION IN FORCE COULD HASTEN THE DETERIORATION OF THOSE RELATIONS.

6. THE MOST ACUTE EMPLOYMENT PROBLEM SEEMS TO BE AT NON-APPROPRIATED FUND ACTIVITIES WHERE RISING LABOR COSTS HAVE IN SOME CASES, WE UNDERSTAND, RESULTED IN SUBSTANTIAL OPERATING DEFICITS. WITH THE PHENOMENON OF CONTINUING INFLATION A NEAR CERTAINTY, A RIF IS IN SUCH CASES ONLY A TEMPORARY AND SPECIOUS PALLIATIVE
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ROME 14875 131739Z

WITH SERIOUS CONFRONTATION WITH ORGANIZED LABOR TO FOLLOW. IT SEEMS FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE THAT THE ONLY POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY VIABLE ALTERNATIVE IS TO SEEK WHATEVER CONGRESSIONAL ACTION IS NECESSARY TO PERMIT SUBSIDIZATION OF NON-APPROPRIATED FUND ACTIVITIES FROM APPROPRIATED RESOURCES. IN MOST INSTANCES OF WHICH WE ARE AWARE, NON-APPROPRIATED FUND ENTERPRISES ARE ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAINING AN ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF MORALE AMONG U.S. SERVICEMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES AT INSTALLATION WHERE THERE ARE NO REPEAT NO SIMILAR FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN NEARBY COMMUNITIES. IN OUR VIEW THOSE ACTIVITIES ARE PART OF THE COST OF MAINTAINING THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN ITALY AND OUGHT SO TO BE TREATED. WITHOUT THEM--OR EVEN WITH THEM IN A DEGRADED FORM RESULTING FROM LABOR TROUBLES THAT WOULD FOLLOW A RIF -- SERVICE AT BASES IN ITALY WOULD BE CONSIDERED A HARD-SHIP BY MOST AMERICAN SERVICEMEN AND THERE WOULD LIKELY BE A DETRIMENTAL IMPACT UPON REENLISTMENT RATES.
GARDNER

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